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ABSTRACT

Part of an effort to expand and improve community college programs and services for older adults, this two-part report summarizes results from a national survey of older adult programs and provides an overview of current trends and their implications for action in community colleges. Following introductory sections, the report discusses a fall 1989 survey of the chief academic officers at the nation's 1,224 two-year colleges. Information was requested on the extent and nature of college programs designed for older adults, the effectiveness of delivery formats, the extent of gerontological training provided, obstacles to providing programs, and the administrative organization of the programs. Usable responses were received from 651 colleges, a response rate of 50.5%, and major findings included the following: (1) while approximately one quarter of the colleges surveyed offered some kind of program, only 7.1% (n=91) offered a wide variety of programs; (2) the most common type of programs offered were exercise (47.9%), arts and crafts (45.4%), retirement financial planning (35.1%), and nutrition (33.2%), while the least common were skills training and personal development; (3) fewer than one in four colleges offered a formal degree or certificate in gerontology with a human services emphasis; and (4) programs for older adults appeared to be unlikely to use nontraditional approaches to instruction. The second part of the report reviews current demographic and economic trends suggesting that the nation's workforce, and population in general, are becoming older; provides a rationale for community colleges to meet the training/lifelong learning needs of older adults; and advances an action agenda for the colleges. The survey instrument is appended. (MAB)

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULTS

## A Status Report

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Don Doucette
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Catherine Ventura-Merkel

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**League for Innovation in the Community College**
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**American Association of Retired Persons**

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LEAGUE for INNOVATION
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# Executive Summary

During 1989-90, the League for Innovation in the Community College and the AARP jointly conducted a survey of all 1,224 two-year colleges in the United States to determine the extent and nature of programs designed for older adults, age 60 and older, offered by these colleges. Approximately half of all colleges responded to the survey; of these, 388 institutions, or about 30 percent of the sample, completed a relatively complex survey questionnaire describing their approaches to older adult programming.

The survey was able to identify fewer than one-quarter of all community colleges with programs and services for older adults. Those most likely to offer such programs were larger, suburban or urban, public institutions that identified themselves as "comprehensive community colleges." Only 91 colleges, or seven percent of the total population surveyed, reported offering "a wide variety of programs designed specifically for older adults as an important part of its mission."

The kinds of programs offered were largely those that have traditionally been considered appropriate for older adults, including programs in exercise and nutrition; avocational arts, crafts, hobbies, and trips; and financial management programs focusing on retirement and estate planning. The least likely to be offered, in fact, were the ones that demographers and other analysts would argue are most needed by older adults to adapt to a changing world—that is, skills training for second and third occupations, personal development courses, and a range of health care programs.

The major conclusions of the study are 1) that few community colleges offer programs designed specifically for older adults, and 2) those that do offer programs have designed them to meet the needs of older adults who achieved "senior citizen" status during the 1970s, which is, coincidentally, when community colleges first began expanding their continuing education and community service missions to include programs for older adults.

The survey results also showed that community colleges offer even fewer programs for gerontological training despite the fact that there is increasing demand for skills to tend to a growing population of older adults in need of professional services. While economic factors provide a partial explanation for the limited number and extent of gerontological training programs, it is unclear who will provide this training if community colleges do not.

Community college programs that are offered for older adults are mostly traditional in orientation, delivery, and organization. They rely on noncredit formats and primarily use those instructional methods and materials used in regular college courses. They tend to be attached to the continuing education or community service function of the college and headed by a director who reports to a dean or by a dean who reports to the chief academic officer. The principal obstacles perceived to hinder program expansion are those related to resources, and the most common kind of assistance requested is with curriculum material.

In summary, only a minority of community colleges offer programs and services for older adults despite the fact that these institutions are a logical vehicle for the lifelong learning needs of older adults. Those colleges that have programs offer ones designed for a homogeneous and retired group of older adults. Very few colleges appear to recognize the emerging role of older adults in meeting workforce requirements and helping ensure the economic competitiveness of the nation.

Colleges predictably cite lack of funding as the principal obstacle to doing more for this clientele. While it is true that funding cuts in some states have seriously limited the colleges' ability to offer new or nontraditional programming, colleges have usually found the support required to offer those programs that are needed by an important college constituency. The most likely explanation for the limited number of programs offered for older adults by community colleges is that this constituent group has not yet realized what community colleges have to offer them.

However, older adults are likely to press for programs as they come to recognize their need for new skills—including skills required to ensure their economic well-being if their retirement income is insufficient and they need to remain in or return to the job market, as well as skills required to adapt to the fast-changing world and the changes they face personally with aging and retirement. Community colleges have the opportunity to prepare for that inevitability by planning how best to utilize their limited resources to provide effective programming that meets the needs of their constituents and the nation.

# Acknowledgments

AARP and the League for Innovation in the Community College wish to acknowledge the contribution of practitioners in community colleges throughout the United States who responded to the Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults. Without the participation of these key individuals, this report could not have been written.

The sponsors would like to extend their appreciation to Charles J. Carlsen, President, and Glen Cabert, Dean of Institutional Advancement and Planning, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas, for their generous support of this important project. Also, AARP and the League for Innovation wish to recognize the critical contributions of other key staff at Johnson County Community College: Jeffrey A. Seybert, Director of Research, Evaluation, and Instructional Development, and Larry Kelley, Senior Research Analyst, who conducted the principal analyses of the survey data, and of Janine Hogan, who assisted in the preparation of the report manuscript.

Finally, AARP and the League for Innovation wish to acknowledge the work of the Task Force on Community College Programs for Older Adults, composed of practitioners in League for Innovation and other community colleges and representatives of AARP regional and national offices. Their experience and input continues to provide the impetus for the work represented in this report.

# Preface

In 1989, the League for Innovation in the Community College and the American Association of Retired Persons agreed to work together as partners, over a three-year period, on projects and activities designed to improve and expand programs and services for older adults, age 60 and over, in the nation's community colleges. In April of that year, a task force made up of representatives from the League's member institutions, selected other community colleges, and AARP's national and regional offices, met in Kansas City to share information and to develop an agenda to guide partnership activities of the League and AARP.

The first activity of this partnership was to conduct a survey of all two-year institutions in the United States to determine the current status of community college programs for older adults. The results of that survey constitute the bulk of the following report.

This report contains two major sections: The first contains the results of the 1989-90 Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults. In narrative and tables, this section details the extent and nature of community college programs designed for older adults, the formats used for these programs, and the ways in which community colleges are organized to serve older adults. The results argue for the need for further development of community college programs and suggest an agenda for action. The actual survey instrument is contained in the appendix.

The second provides a brief overview of key demographic and economic forces that have prompted the League and AARP to explore ways to expand and improve services for older adults. This section also provides a rationale for community colleges to prepare to meet the needs of this important constituency. An underlying assumption is that community colleges are well-positioned to meet the lifelong learning needs of this growing segment of the population, and that there is a national economic imperative for doing so.

With sponsorship from AARP, this report is being distributed to the presidents of every community college in the United States. The purpose of this widespread distribution is to raise the awareness of community college leaders about the implications of an aging society for their institutions and to serve as a catalyst for individual and collective action.

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# Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults

## The Survey

In the fall of 1989, the American Association of Retired Persons and the League for Innovation in the Community College jointly conducted a survey to gather information regarding programs and services designed for older adults, age 60 and older, and offered by two-year colleges.

## Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to determine the following:

- the extent and nature of community college programs designed for older adults;
- the nature and effectiveness of delivery formats used for such programs;
- the extent and nature of gerontological training provided by community colleges;
- obstacles to providing programs and services for older adults as perceived by community college practitioners;
- college organization for older adult programs.

## Methodology

In November of 1989, a cover letter, the survey, a business-response postcard, and a business-response envelope for the survey were sent to the "chief academic officers" of 1,288 institutions identified as community, junior, technical, or two-year branch colleges in the United States by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC), the major national association of community colleges in the United States. (These colleges will, hereafter, be collectively referred to as "community colleges.") While there are only 1,224 institutions generally recognized to be community colleges, the AACJC mailing list also contained addresses for administrative offices of community college districts in addition to the address of the colleges that comprised these districts, as well as other administrative units that might not be considered distinct colleges.

The chief academic officer was asked to do two things: 1) forward the survey to the most appropriate person at the college to complete it, and 2) complete and return a postcard to the survey coordinator identifying the person to whom the survey was forwarded. Alternatively, the chief academic officer was given the option of checking a response on the postcard—"My college does *not* offer programs designed specifically for older adults, and older adults do *not* participate in significant numbers in regular college programs."—and returning the postcard with the promise of not being contacted with additional requests for information. Several chief academic officers simply completed the surveys themselves rather than forwarding them to others on their campuses.

The survey instrument and the response postcard are contained in the appendix to this report.

In January of 1990, a follow-up letter, survey, and postcard were sent to all colleges from which surveys had not yet been returned. During the spring of 1990, follow up by mail and telephone was conducted, targeting the individuals identified by their chief academic officers as responsible for completing and returning the survey, until the target of a 50 percent response rate was achieved.

**Responding Community Colleges**

The survey elicited 629 responses; 241 postcards and 388 surveys were received. These responses represented a total of 651 community colleges, as 22 additional colleges were represented in responses completed by a district office or other central administrative unit.

Table 1 details the survey response. The response rate for the survey was 50.5 percent; it was calculated by dividing the total number of colleges represented by the survey results (651) by the total number of colleges and administrative units to which the survey was sent (1,228). In other words, slightly more than half of the community colleges in the United States responded in some manner to be included in the results of the survey.

Table 2 identifies selected characteristics of the colleges that completed and returned the survey. Approximately three-fourths identified themselves as comprehensive community colleges, but this understates their actual representation among survey respondents. One in nine colleges checked multiple responses to identify their type of institution, and nearly all of these included "comprehensive community college" among the responses checked. Also, nearly all (94.8 percent) of the responding colleges were publicly controlled.

The responding colleges ranged in size and location. The median student headcount enrollment in credit courses was 4,372 and the median population of the service area 200,000. However, nearly one-third (30.9 percent) of the respondents enrolled fewer than 2,500 credit students, and nearly half identified themselves as "rural." The picture that emerges generally reflects the pattern of community colleges nationwide. While some suburban and urban community colleges are quite large, enrolling tens of thousands of students from services areas with populations of more than a million persons, many more are small, serving communities of under 100,000.

Table 1
**Response Rate to Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults**

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of two-year colleges/ administrative units surveyed | 1,288 |
| Responses | |
| postcard received | 241 |
| survey received | 388 |
| subtotal of responses received | 629 |
| additional colleges represented by responses[1] | 22 |
| total two-year colleges represented | 651 |
| Response rate[2] | 50.5% |

[1] Includes multiple colleges represented by a single survey response completed by a district office or central administrative unit.
[2] Calculated as the total number of colleges represented by survey responses divided by the total number of colleges and administrative units surveyed.

The survey requested other descriptive information, including college budgets, funding sources, total number of older adults enrolled in credit and noncredit programs, and the gender and racial/ethnic background of older adults enrolled. However, data on these variables were apparently unavailable to the majority of the individuals who completed the surveys, and insufficient data were provided to report meaningful results.

In general terms, the results showed that the colleges responding to the survey are reasonably representative of community colleges nationwide in many selected characteristics—with the notable exception of their greater likelihood of offering programs and services for older adults.

Table 2
**Selected Characteristics of Responding Colleges**

| | Percent of responses |
|---|---|
| *Type of two-year college:* | |
| comprehensive community college | 71.1% |
| technical institute | 6.8 |
| junior college | 7.3 |
| two-year branch campus of a university | 3.1 |
| checked more than one response | 11.5 |
| *Location:*[1] | |
| Southeast | 16.0% |
| Northeast | 16.5 |
| North Central | 31.7 |
| Northwest | 8.5 |
| Southwest | 27.3 |
| *Control:* | |
| public | 94.8% |
| private | 5.2 |
| *Location:* | |
| suburban | 25.6% |
| urban | 19.4 |
| rural | 44.1 |
| checked more than one response | 10.9 |
| *Size (fall 1989, student headcount enrollment in credit courses):* | |
| 1-2,499 | 30.9% |
| 2,500-4,999 | 22.5 |
| 5,000-7,499 | 12.6 |
| 7,500-9,999 | 10.4 |
| 10,000+ | 23.6 |
| median student headcount enrollment=4,372 | |
| *Population of service area:* | |
| 1-99,999 | 27.1% |
| 100,000-199,999 | 22.6 |
| 200,000-299,999 | 16.4 |
| 300,000-399,999 | 8.3 |
| 400,000-499,999 | 5.4 |
| 500,000+ | 20.2 |
| median population=200,000 | |

[1] States included in the regional groupings are as follows: Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA); Northeast (CT, MA, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA); North Central (IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI); Northwest (AK, OR, WA, WY); Southwest (AZ, CA, CO, HI, NM, OK, TX); no responses were received from states not listed.

## The Results

### Extent of Programs and Services

Roughly half of the colleges (51.4 percent) that responded either by postcard or survey reported neither programs designed specifically for older adults nor significant participation by older adults in college programs. An approximately equal number (48.6 percent) indicated that they offered either some or a wide variety of programs for this clientele. Table 3 details these results.

However, it would be an error to assume that half of all community colleges offer some programs designed for older adults. Colleges with such programs are much more likely to respond to the survey than those without them. In fact, the survey was able to identify fewer than one-quarter of all community colleges in the United States as having any programs or services designed for older adults. Further, only 91 colleges were identified as having a comprehensive array of programs and services for older adults—only one out of seven responding colleges and only 7.1 percent of the 1,288 colleges surveyed.

While the actual percentage of community colleges designing and offering programs to older adults is somewhere between 23 and 49 percent, the results of this survey have been interpreted as indicating that approximately one-quarter, and no more than one-third, of such colleges offer any programs at all.

Table 4 identifies the characteristics of two-year colleges most likely to offer programs for older adults. Larger, urban and suburban, public community colleges that identified themselves as "comprehensive community colleges" are more likely to offer programs for older adults than their smaller, private, or more specialized counterparts. Rural colleges appear somewhat less likely

Table 3
**Summary of the Number and Percent of Responding Colleges Offering Programs and Services Designed for Older Adults**

| | Number of responding colleges | Percent of responses | Percent of all colleges surveyed |
|---|---|---|---|
| No programs designed for older adults | | | |
| postcard responses | 243 | 39.0% | 18.9% |
| survey responses | 77 | 12.4 | 6.0 |
| Subtotal of "no programs" response | 320 | 51.4 | 24.8 |
| Programs designed for older adults | | | |
| some programs | 205 | 32.9 | 15.9 |
| wide variety of programs | 91 | 14.6 | 7.1 |
| other | 7 | 1.1 | .5 |
| Subtotal of positive "program" response | 303 | 48.6 | 23.5 |

Table 4
Percent of Colleges Offering Programs for Older Adults
by Selected College Characteristics

| College characteristic | Number of responses | No programs | Some programs | Wide variety of programs | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Type:* | | | | | |
| comprehensive community college | 266 | 15.4% | 56.4% | 27.4% | .8% |
| technical institute | 26 | 50.0 | 46.2 | .0 | 3.8 |
| junior college | 28 | 25.0 | 46.4 | 17.9 | 10.7 |
| 2-year branch campus of university | 12 | 41.7 | 58.3 | .0 | .0 |
| checked more than one response | 44 | 18.2 | 54.5 | 25.0 | 2.3 |
| *Location:* | | | | | |
| suburban | 53 | 15.1 | 52.8 | 30.2 | 1.9 |
| urban | 41 | 19.5 | 61.0 | 19.5 | .0 |
| rural | 91 | 22.0 | 53.8 | 20.9 | 3.3 |
| checked more than one response | 23 | 13.0 | 60.9 | 26.1 | .0 |
| *Control:* | | | | | |
| public | 199 | 19.1 | 56.8 | 23.6 | .5 |
| private | 11 | 27.3 | 36.4 | 9.1 | 27.3 |
| *Size (fall 1989 credit headcount enrollment):* | | | | | |
| 1-2,499 | 106 | 27.4 | 48.1 | 19.8 | 4.7 |
| 2,500-4,999 | 79 | 27.8 | 59.5 | 12.7 | .0 |
| 5,000-7,499 | 45 | 15.6 | 62.2 | 22.2 | .0 |
| 7,500-9,999 | 37 | 21.6 | 45.9 | 29.7 | 2.7 |
| 10,000+ | 84 | 9.5 | 59.5 | 31.0 | .0 |

to provide such programs, but this result is probably more a function of size than location. The results did not vary by section of the country.

**Nature of Programs and Services**

Table 5 details the major responses of colleges to questions of the extent and nature of their programming designed for older adults. The table reveals that, as a group, responding community colleges offer a wide variety of programs for this clientele.

However, of the 388 colleges who completed the survey, fewer than one-quarter individually offered most of the programs itemized on the survey. Only 7 of the 37 program areas listed were offered by 30 percent or more of the responding colleges.

An assumption was made that respondents who omitted items in this section of the survey probably did so because they did not offer the program listed on the survey. So, the percentages shown in Table 5 were calculated using the total number of 388 respondents as the denominator, and the percentage of missing data is also reported for each item.

Table 5
**Percent of Responding Colleges Offering Programs and Services Designed Specifically for Older Adults**
(number of responding colleges = 388)

| Type of Program | Have current program | Program being planned | No program or plans, but need exists | No program no plans, no need | No response/ missing data | Older adults in regular programs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Financial management skills:* | | | | | | |
| basic financial management skills | 23.5% | 11.3% | 25.3% | 16.2% | 23.7% | 27.8% |
| savings and investments | 26.5 | 9.8 | 23.2 | 14.7 | 25.8 | 28.1 |
| wills, probate, trusts | 30.2 | 10.8 | 25.0 | 12.4 | 21.6 | 22.9 |
| taxes | 22.2 | 11.1 | 26.5 | 14.7 | 25.5 | 27.1 |
| pensions, Social Security, etc. | 24.2 | 13.1 | 30.7 | 13.4 | 18.6 | 13.9 |
| insurance (health, life, car, etc.) | 16.5 | 10.1 | 32.2 | 19.6 | 21.6 | 14.7 |
| selecting/using financial advisors | 16.5 | 7.7 | 30.4 | 19.6 | 25.8 | 19.6 |
| consumer and legal rights | 18.8 | 12.1 | 29.4 | 16.8 | 22.9 | 18.8 |
| retirement financial planning | 35.1 | 10.6 | 23.2 | 9.3 | 21.9 | 21.9 |
| *Health and health care:* | | | | | | |
| exercise | 47.9 | 4.9 | 19.6 | 7.5 | 20.1 | 29.9 |
| nutrition | 33.2 | 7.5 | 25.0 | 11.9 | 22.4 | 20.6 |
| injury prevention | 11.6 | 7.0 | 36.9 | 22.9 | 21.6 | 7.5 |
| driving safety | 24.2 | 8.8 | 26.5 | 19.8 | 20.6 | 10.3 |
| mental health education | 16.8 | 7.7 | 35.3 | 17.8 | 22.4 | 12.4 |
| medication education | 16.0 | 10.6 | 35.3 | 17.8 | 20.4 | 8.2 |
| dental health education | 2.6 | 8.0 | 37.6 | 28.4 | 23.5 | 7.2 |
| smoking cessation | 4.4 | 8.0 | 34.5 | 25.3 | 27.8 | 17.0 |
| long-term care services | 12.6 | 9.5 | 37.1 | 18.6 | 22.2 | 7.7 |
| selecting/using health care | 12.6 | 8.8 | 38.9 | 19.1 | 20.6 | 7.5 |
| *Career/occupational education:* | | | | | | |
| career counseling | 12.9 | 6.4 | 20.9 | 27.8 | 32.0 | 29.9 |
| job placement assistance | 10.6 | 5.4 | 24.7 | 27.6 | 31.7 | 26.0 |
| literacy training | 16.5 | 1.4 | 21.6 | 16.8 | 38.7 | 39.7 |
| technological/computer literacy | 22.9 | 7.7 | 19.6 | 14.7 | 35.1 | 36.6 |
| skills/self-employment | 14.2 | .5 | 1.5 | .3 | 83.5 | 9.8 |
| skills/post retirement occupations | 9.0 | .3 | 1.3 | .5 | 88.9 | 4.1 |
| *Cultural/recreational/enrichment activities:* | | | | | | |
| trips | 30.9 | 5.7 | 16.5 | 21.4 | 25.5 | 25.0 |
| participation/organized athletics | 14.9 | 3.1 | 21.1 | 34.3 | 26.5 | 17.5 |
| participation/performing arts | 23.7 | 4.9 | 20.9 | 17.5 | 33.0 | 30.7 |
| humanities and social sciences | 30.2 | 5.2 | 21.4 | 11.3 | 32.0 | 35.3 |
| political and civic forums | 26.5 | 6.7 | 20.9 | 16.0 | 29.9 | 26.8 |
| arts, crafts, hobbies | 45.4 | 4.4 | 14.4 | 8.8 | 27.1 | 41.5 |
| *Personal development:* | | | | | | |
| self-esteem, self-confidence, etc. | 22.2 | 7.0 | 26.5 | 14.9 | 29.4 | 28.4 |
| volunteer skills | 15.7 | 10.8 | 30.9 | 19.1 | 23.5 | 18.0 |
| leadership development skills | 11.1 | 8.2 | 33.2 | 20.4 | 27.1 | 19.6 |
| interpersonal communications | 21.4 | 5.7 | 27.2 | 14.2 | 31.7 | 29.9 |
| coping with grieving, loss | 22.2 | 9.3 | 31.4 | 12.1 | 25.0 | 21.4 |
| retirement lifestyle options | 21.4 | 9.5 | 32.7 | 14.7 | 21.6 | 13.7 |

Table 6 identifies the most commonly offered programs, and, taken together with Table 5, these results reveal a great deal about the nature of programs offered by community colleges for older adults.

Overwhelmingly, the kinds of programs most commonly offered by community colleges are those that have traditionally been considered appropriate for older adults. That is, basic health programs, such as exercise and nutrition; avocational programs, including arts, crafts, hobbies, and trips; and financial management programs focusing on retirement and estates are the programs most likely to be designed for this clientele.

Equally revealing are the programs least likely to be offered, including a range of programs related to career and occupational education, personal development, and health and health care services. What is striking is that current community college offerings appear to be in response to the needs of the generation of older adults who achieved "senior citizen" status in the 1970s, which, coincidentally, is the decade during which community colleges first began to expand their continuing education and community services missions and to develop programs for older adults.

Yet, the older adults reaching maturity in the 1990s are demonstrably different than their counterparts 15-20 years earlier. Older adults today are at least as likely to be interested in or need skills training for second occupations as they are interested in instruction in contract bridge. Older adults today are much less likely to be frail, unhealthy, impoverished, and unwilling to learn new things than their earlier counterparts. Also, according to analysts and demographers, by the year 2000 older adults will constitute an important source of skilled workers needed to fuel the national economy.

Thus, they will require a range of skills training programs for self-employment, post-retirement occupations, and career counseling and job placement. However, these are precisely the kinds of programs least likely to be offered to older adults by community colleges.

Table 7 further details the programs perceived by community college practitioners (respondents to the survey) to be most needed by older adults but not currently offered. These results underscore the point that community college practitioners continue to perceive the greatest needs to be for avocational programs. Not one of the top fourteen programs identified as needed by respondents is related to career or occupational skills. While the respondents recognized the changing characteristics and needs of older adults by identifying a range of personal development and health care programs, it is clear that the respondents have not clearly identified skills training as an unmet need—and they probably have not been asked by their older adult constituents for such training.

Table 8 suggests another factor that might help explain the apparent paucity of programs designed for older adults in such critical areas as career/occupational education and personal development. For a number of programs, colleges reported that "older adults participate in significant numbers in regular college programs not specifically designed for them." The possibility exists that, for at least some colleges, if older adults are perceived to be adequately served by regular college programs, then there is no impetus to develop special programs designed just to meet their needs.

*Please note that Tables 6, 7 and 8 all contain data identical to that contained in Table 5, but these have been synthesized and rearranged to focus on key results.*

Table 8 shows that many of the same programs that community colleges are most likely to provide for older adults—including arts and crafts, exercise, performing arts, humanities and social sciences, and some financial management skills—are the same ones in which older adults are likely to enroll in regular college programs. Yet, for the first time in any analysis of the survey data, programs related to career and occupational training and personal development skills were

Table 6
**Programs Designed Specifically for Older Adults**
**Most Commonly Offered by Responding Colleges**

| Type of Program | Have current program | Program being planned | Older adults enrolled in regular programs |
|---|---|---|---|
| exercise | 47.9 | 4.9 | 29.9 |
| arts, crafts, hobbies | 45.4 | 4.4 | 41.5 |
| retirement financial planning | 35.1 | 10.6 | 21.9 |
| nutrition | 33.2 | 7.5 | 20.6 |
| trips | 30.9 | 5.7 | 25.0 |
| wills, probate, trusts | 30.2 | 10.8 | 22.9 |
| humanities and social sciences | 30.2 | 5.2 | 35.3 |

Table 7
**Programs Designed Specifically for Older Adults**
**Most Commonly Cited as Needed by Responding Colleges**

| Type of Program | No program or plans, but need exists | Have current program | Older adults in regular programs |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Health and health care:* | | | |
| selecting/using health care providers | 38.9% | 12.6% | 7.5% |
| dental health education | 37.6 | 2.6 | 7.2 |
| long-term care services | 37.1 | 12.6 | 7.7 |
| injury prevention | 36.9 | 11.6 | 7.5 |
| medication education | 35.3 | 16.0 | 8.2 |
| mental health education | 35.3 | 16.8 | 12.4 |
| smoking cessation | 34.5 | 4.4 | 17.0 |
| *Personal development:* | | | |
| leadership development skills | 33.2 | 11.1 | 19.6 |
| retirement lifestyle options | 32.7 | 21.4 | 13.7 |
| coping with loss/grieving | 31.4 | 22.2 | 21.4 |
| volunteer skills | 30.9 | 15.7 | 18.0 |
| *Financial management skills:* | | | |
| insurance (life, health, car, home, etc.) | 32.2 | 16.5 | 19.6 |
| pensions, Social Security, public benefits | 30.7 | 24.2 | 13.9 |
| selecting/using financial advisors | 30.4 | 16.5 | 19.6 |

ranked in the top fifteen. Apparently, whatever training is done by community colleges in the areas of literacy, technological/computer literacy, interpersonal communications, self-esteem and self-confidence, and job placement assistance is accomplished within the context of regular college programs. It may be that these are common needs among all age groups and that older adults do not need specifically designed programs in these areas.

It must be noted, however, that career counseling and job placement assistance also received among the highest rates of "no need" responses (exceeded only by participation in organized athletics). So, the fact that older adults use regular college services for this important aspect of career and occupational education is not a completely adequate explanation for the little attention colleges give to the need for such programs for older adults. The observation stands that community colleges do not seem to perceive preparation of older adults for second, third, or fourth careers to be an imminent concern, yet the fact that older adults are served by some regular college programs in this area may mitigate the effect to some degree.

Table 8
**Regular College Programs in Which Older Adults Are Enrolled in Significant Numbers**

| Type of Program | Older adults enrolled in regular college programs | Have program for older adults | No programs no plans, no need |
|---|---|---|---|
| arts, craft, hobbies | 41.5% | 45.4% | 8.8% |
| literacy training | 39.7 | 16.5 | 16.8 |
| technological/computer literacy | 36.6 | 22.9 | 14.7 |
| humanities and social sciences | 35.3 | 30.2 | 11.3 |
| participation/performing arts | 30.7 | 23.7 | 17.5 |
| interpersonal communications | 29.9 | 21.4 | 14.2 |
| career counseling | 29.9 | 12.9 | 27.8 |
| exercise | 29.9 | 47.9 | 7.5 |
| self-esteem, self-confidence, etc. | 28.4 | 22.2 | 14.9 |
| savings and investments | 28.1 | 26.5 | 14.7 |
| basic financial management skills | 27.8 | 23.5 | 16.2 |
| taxes | 27.1 | 22.2 | 14.7 |
| job placement assistance | 26.0 | 10.6 | 27.6 |

**Delivery Formats**

The results detailed in Table 9 indicate that the methods that community colleges use to deliver programs designed for older adults are very much the same as used in most college programs. The most commonly used method includes group instruction in multiple-session courses taught in-person by instructors. There were two major exceptions to this tendency to rely on traditional formats: The great majority of programs for older adults are offered on a noncredit basis, and many—in some subjects nearly half—are offered in off-campus locations.

In general, respondents reported few differences in the delivery formats used by different types of programs.

These results are what might be expected, especially for programs that are primarily avocational in nature, that is, less academic. There are some indications that career and occupational skills, if they are offered to older adult populations, are somewhat more likely to be offered for credit and on-campus, more like traditional academic courses. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the prevailing assumption that older adults seek the affiliation that comes with class attendance, little use has been made of individualized instruction or telecommunications to deliver programming to this clientele. On the other hand, various forms of distance education clearly hold promise of increasing access to programs to both very busy older adults and those whose mobility is limited by health or physical disabilities.

Table 10 further illustrates that traditional methods for delivering instruction are overwhelmingly those in use in community college programs for older adults. Respondents' ratings of the effectiveness of various formats and methods indicate no preference for formats, instructional materials and methods, staffing, and communications and advertising. The only formats

Table 9
**Most Common Delivery Formats Used by Responding Colleges for Programs and Services Designed for Older Adults by Subject Area**

| Subject area | Format | | Number of Sessions | | Distance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | credit | noncredit | single | multiple | TV | in-person |
| Financial management skills | 12.2% | 86.3% | 22.4% | 75.6% | .4% | 99.1% |
| Health and health care | 20.7 | 76.3 | 21.5 | 76.1 | 1.3 | 98.3 |
| Career and occupational skills | 23.1 | 72.6 | 17.9 | 79.5 | 1.1 | 98.1 |
| Cultural/recreational activities | 10.4 | 85.9 | 15.1 | 80.0 | .7 | 98.9 |
| Personal development | 14.5 | 82.5 | 17.0 | 78.5 | .4 | 98.8 |

| Subject area | Location | | Interaction | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | on-campus | off-campus | group | individualized |
| Financial management skills | 56.8% | 36.0% | 93.6% | 4.8% |
| Health and health care | 49.6 | 42.9 | 91.7 | 6.3 |
| Career and occupational skills | 62.2 | 30.3 | 82.1 | 15.4 |
| Cultural/recreational activities | 40.3 | 45.9 | 93.7 | 4.9 |
| Personal development | 49.0 | 39.8 | 88.0 | 8.9 |

Table 10
**Respondents' Ratings of the Effectiveness of Various Formats and Methods Used for Programs and Services Designed for Older Adults**

| Formats and methods | Very effective | Generally effective | Not effective | Have not used |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Delivery formats*: | | | | |
| single-session workshops, presentations, etc. | 43.1% | 43.1% | 1.6% | 12.2% |
| multiple-session courses, seminars, etc. | 54.7 | 37.9 | 2.8 | 4.6 |
| lecture series | 27.2 | 41.0 | 9.2 | 22.6 |
| peer-led discussion groups | 16.7 | 27.2 | 7.9 | 48.2 |
| support groups | 18.3 | 26.2 | 3.3 | 52.2 |
| telecourses | 3.8 | 12.8 | 14.5 | 69.0 |
| programs for home personal computers or VCRs | 9.5 | 12.5 | 2.4 | 75.7 |
| college-credit courses | 28.5 | 35.8 | 11.6 | 24.2 |
| tuition waiver for credit courses | 43.1 | 22.4 | 3.9 | 28.6 |
| waiver or reduced fees for noncredit programs | 47.4 | 22.1 | 1.6 | 28.9 |
| *Instructional materials and methods*: | | | | |
| published workbooks and texts | 21.7 | 51.1 | 8.0 | 19.2 |
| instructor-prepared materials, handouts, etc. | 57.9 | 37.2 | 0.3 | 4.6 |
| slides, video or audio tapes, overheads, etc. | 50.9 | 39.2 | 1.3 | 8.5 |
| computer-assisted programs, tutorials, etc. | 15.3 | 26.9 | 4.0 | 53.8 |
| self-tests | 10.6 | 23.6 | 7.0 | 58.8 |
| *Use of staff*: | | | | |
| regular, full-time college instructors | 49.5 | 30.5 | 2.3 | 17.7 |
| visiting, adjunct, or part-time instructors | 63.7 | 31.7 | 0.6 | 4.0 |
| selected professionals in the field | 67.1 | 25.5 | 0.3 | 7.1 |
| volunteers | 28.8 | 34.5 | 5.7 | 31.0 |
| *Communications and advertising vehicles*: | | | | |
| radio | 24.2 | 45.5 | 7.1 | 23.2 |
| broadcast television | 12.3 | 25.6 | 6.3 | 55.8 |
| cable or public-access television | 12.6 | 31.6 | 13.3 | 42.5 |
| newspaper ads or articles | 46.3 | 43.2 | 3.1 | 7.4 |
| brochures, flyers, and posters | 54.4 | 39.6 | 2.7 | 3.3 |
| staff presentations at senior centers, etc. | 44.4 | 33.3 | 5.6 | 16.7 |

receiving as much as 10 percent "not effective" rating were telecourses (14.5 percent), cable or public-access television (13.3 percent) and college-credit courses (11.6 percent).

More significantly, programs designed for older adults appear to be unlikely to use, or even experiment with, nontraditional approaches to instruction. Only about half of the respondents had ever used peer-led discussion groups or support groups, though those that did found them effective. Fewer than half had tried to use computer or telecommunications technology, such as computer-assisted tutorials; self-tests; programs for use on home computers or VCRs; telecourses; or public access, or broadcast television for communicating with older adult audiences.

**Gerontological Training**

In addition to determining the extent of programming offered for older adults, a major purpose of the survey was to determine the extent of gerontological training provided by community colleges. Tables 11 and 12 document that community colleges currently offer only very limited gerontological training for either professionals or volunteers providing services or care to older adults.

Data in Table 11 show that fewer than one in four of the responding colleges offered a formal degree or certificate in gerontology with a human services emphasis; fewer than one in five a degree or certificate for nursing home or geriatric aides; and only one in seven a formal program in gerontology with a health care emphasis. Overall, half or fewer of the responding colleges indicated that they provided any kind of training for professionals in aging.

The most commonly provided training was for nursing home or geriatric aides, but the majority of such training was noncredit or did not lead to a formal certificate or degree. This result is at least partially explained by the reluctance of some community colleges to offer degree programs in preparation for jobs that pay close to minimum wage—because it is difficult to justify the expense of offering the program or to justify a student's investment in time and energy to earn the same wages as an untrained aide. This phenomenon has been repeated in other fields, such as child care, where the demand for trained staff is great but where the financial rewards that differentiate between trained and untrained staff are few. Unfortunately, solutions to this problem lie outside educational institutions in the human services industry and the bodies that regulate them.

Neither do many community colleges offer training for volunteer or family caregivers of older adults. Table 12 shows that fewer than one-quarter of the colleges responding to the survey reported providing training for adult children, spouses, relatives, friends, or volunteers. The most commonly provided training is in first aid and emergency procedures, information about community resources and services, and interpersonal communications. On the other hand, only one in six colleges provided training or information about home adaptations and products to assist the care of older adults.

It appears that community colleges generally have not focused on providing gerontological training. In fact, they are less likely to provide gerontological training than they are to provide programming for older adults themselves.

Table 11
**Percent of Responding Colleges Offering Professional Gerontological Training by Level of Training**
(number of responding colleges = 388)

| Professional training | Associate degree program | One-year certificate program | Less than One-year certificate | Short-term noncredit certificate | Training but no degree/ certificate | Does not offer training | No response/ missing data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gerontology—health care | 5.4% | 4.4% | 3.9% | 11.3% | 16.2% | 39.9% | 18.9% |
| Gerontology—human services | 11.9 | 7.0 | 2.8 | 9.8 | 13.7 | 40.2 | 14.6 |
| Nursing home/ geriatric aide | 4.6 | 5.2 | 8.8 | 20.1 | 12.6 | 34.3 | 14.6 |

Table 12
**Percent of Responding Colleges Providing Training for Types of Volunteers or Family Caregivers of Older Adults by Subject Area**
(responding colleges = 388)

| Subject area | For adult children, spouses, relatives, and friends | For volunteers | For both family and friends and volunteers | Does not offer training | No response/ missing data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nutrition | 12.1% | 4.4% | 12.4% | 51.0% | 20.1% |
| Home health care skills | 11.9 | 4.4 | 13.1 | 51.0 | 19.6 |
| Medication use and abuse | 8.8 | 4.9 | 10.3 | 53.9 | 22.2 |
| First aid/emergency procedures | 13.1 | 7.7 | 17.0 | 43.6 | 18.6 |
| Implications of normal aging | 12.9 | 5.2 | 12.9 | 49.5 | 19.6 |
| Home adaptations/care products | 5.7 | 3.1 | 6.4 | 62.1 | 22.7 |
| Diseases and their implications | 9.3 | 5.2 | 11.3 | 53.1 | 21.1 |
| Alzheimer's dementia & implications | 10.8 | 3.6 | 14.4 | 52.1 | 19.1 |
| Community resources/services | 13.9 | 8.5 | 12.9 | 45.9 | 18.8 |
| Interpersonal communications | 13.7 | 4.1 | 14.4 | 47.4 | 20.4 |

**Obstacles and Needed Assistance**

The survey asked community college respondents to identify the most common obstacles to providing programs for older adults and the type of assistance that they most need. Overwhelmingly, community colleges identified lack of funding as the principal obstacle, cited by 72.4 percent of respondents. Table 13 shows the list of other obstacles identified by respondents, including difficulty in reaching older adult audiences (32.5 percent) and lack of trained staff (31.4 percent).

Table 13 also shows the assistance that responding community colleges need to expand or improve their programming for older adults. Curriculum materials and publications for handouts lead the list with approximately 60 percent of the respondents indicating need in this area. Technical assistance and training followed with just under 40 percent.

Responses to these questions provide some insight into the reasons that only about one-quarter of the community colleges in the nation offer programs designed specifically for older adults. The indifference of college leaders and faculty and the negative attitudes of older adults themselves toward older adult programming were identified as obstacles by the respondents—who were responsible for the area in their colleges and thus more likely to be advocates for such programming. About 10 percent identified lack of interest of college leaders as an obstacle, and eight respondents (2.1 percent) filled in "faculty indifference" under the other category. Yet, seventeen respondents (4.4 percent) wrote in "negative attitudes of older adults."

It appears that only a combination of factors can explain the fact that so few community colleges offer programs designed for so numerous a potential clientele. These might include institutional indifference, lack of awareness of college leaders, preoccupation with other priorities, or the absence of constituent demand for older adult programming.

Historically, however, community colleges

have been sensitive to community needs and have usually responded to organized appeals to serve identified interest groups. The paucity of community college programs for older adults can probably be explained, at least in part, as a result of lack of expressed needs by the current generation of older adults. The possibility also exists that older adults are satisfied with community college programs that were not necessarily designed for them, and Table 5 provides ample evidence that older adults enroll in a variety of regular college courses.

**Organization of Older Adult Programs**

Community colleges, like most complex organizations, tend to develop organizational structures that reflect their own histories, personnel, and unique circumstances. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize about similarities and differences in the way that community colleges organize to provide older adult programming. Table 14 summarizes key characteristics of those who responded to the survey questions on organizational structure.

Table 13
**Percent of Responding Colleges Reporting Obstacles and Types of Assistance Needed to Provide Programs and Services for Older Adults More Effectively**

| | Percent of Respondents |
|---|---|
| *Obstacles* | |
| lack of funding | 72.4% |
| difficulty reaching older adult audience | 32.7 |
| lack of trained staff | 31.4 |
| competition from other providers | 22.7 |
| lack of appropriate materials and resources | 14.7 |
| inaccessible locations/transportation problems | 12.9 |
| lack of interest from college leaders | 10.6 |
| (write in) other institutional constraints | 5.2 |
| (write in) attitudes of older adults | 4.4 |
| (write in) faculty indifference | 2.1 |
| (write in) state or federal regulations | 1.5 |
| *Needed Assistance* | |
| curriculum materials | 62.6% |
| publications for handouts | 58.0 |
| technical assistance | 39.4 |
| training | 34.0 |
| (write in) publicity and marketing | 5.9 |
| (write in) grants for program development | 3.6 |
| (write in) legislative support | 1.5 |
| other write ins | 5.2 |

Table 14
**Organization of Responding Colleges for Providing Programs and Services for Older Adults**

| | Percent of Respondents |
|---|---|
| *Coordinated by a single office:* | 67.5% |
| *Name of office:* | |
| Continuing education/community services | 62.9% |
| Other | 15.7 |
| Senior citizen program | 13.3 |
| Academic affairs | 4.5 |
| Lifelong learning | 3.6 |
| *Title of principal administrator:* | |
| director | 36.0% |
| dean or assistant/associate dean | 34.5 |
| coordinator | 16.2 |
| other administrator | 6.1 |
| chief academic officer | 5.1 |
| faculty | 1.5 |
| volunteer | .5 |
| other | 1.6 |
| *Title principal administrator reports to:* | |
| dean or assistant/associate dean | 42.2% |
| chief academic officer | 27.6 |
| chief executive officer | 15.9 |
| director | 9.1 |
| other administrator | 5.2 |

Fully two-thirds of those responding reported that their colleges' programs designed for older adults were coordinated by a single office. Most often, this central office is the division of continuing education or community services and is headed by a director-level administrator who reports to a dean or by a dean who reports to the chief academic officer. At least for those responding to the survey, programs for older adults appear to be coordinated by a relatively high-ranking administrator. This could imply program stability, as well as commitment on the part of the institution to serve its older adult clientele effectively. Alternatively, this could imply that few colleges have staff designated specifically to provide programming for older adults or gerontological training as their principal responsibility.

**Discussion of Results**

The results of the survey are both somewhat expected and somewhat surprising. It comes as no surprise to many with experience working in the field that the survey found that community colleges throughout the United States offer a smattering of many different kinds of programs for older adults, primarily through their continuing education and community service divisions. It also comes as no surprise, however, that few community colleges have taken a comprehensive approach to providing an array of programs designed specifically for this clientele.

While community colleges accurately represent themselves as institutions offering a broad spectrum of programs to meet a wide range of community needs, their comprehensive programming tends to be reserved for their major transfer and occupational education programs. While these major programs enroll students of all ages, they were originally designed to meet the needs of traditional college-age students and have been adapted to meet the needs of other students over the years.

Programs to serve special populations are quite common in community colleges. For example, programs for underprepared students, persons with various handicapping conditions, and employees of local business and industry requiring skills retraining have received special priority over the last decade. Community colleges have made special efforts to accommodate nontraditional students, mostly working adults, by altering class schedules, providing opportunities for distance education, and other arrangements to reduce barriers to attending otherwise traditional college programs. These institutions have also steadily expanded their continuing education and community service missions so that they now include an enormous variety of courses, seminars, workshops, and other activities developed in response to requests from individuals and groups in the community, as well as in response to perceived market demands.

However, it would appear from the results of this survey that older adults have not yet been identified by most community colleges as a special clientele requiring specially designed programs. Rather, older adult programming is offered alongside other programs, either offered for credit through regular college programs or on a non-credit basis through continuing education and community service programs. Apparently, older adults have not emerged from the large and diverse group of "community members" as a distinct clientele for most community colleges.

The question remains, however, why colleges that are apparently committed to serving older adults effectively—the majority of those responding to the survey—generally do not offer a full range of programs to meet the needs of the current older adult population, nor do many provide gerontological training.

The lack of gerontological training is almost certainly partially related to the absence of financial rewards in the human services delivery field to justify developing academic programs to prepare for entry-level positions. When the need for personnel with gerontological training results in established professions with clear career paths, training programs will inevitably follow, and community colleges are likely to lead in their development.

There are also plausible explanations for the relative absence of programs aimed at the needs of today's older adults, not all of whom are retired and engaged in avocational pursuits. While demographers and economists are certain of the important role that older adults will play in the American work force of the 1990s and beyond, the reality of older adults working into their seventies in second, third, and fourth careers is only slowly coming into focus. It would appear that neither college leaders nor older adults themselves have yet recognized that skills training and workforce preparation will become major needs.

Also, as older adults live longer and healthier lives, the need for programs to provide volunteer skills, leadership abilities, and personal growth and development skills will increase. Lifelong learning will become increasingly relevant to a

larger and larger portion of the population.

Historically, community colleges have responded to the needs of their constituents. The most likely explanation for the limited number of programs offered by community colleges for older adults is that this constituent group has not yet realized what these colleges have to offer them, nor what skills they may need in the future, and they have not petitioned community colleges to offer specially designed programs.

When older adults themselves become aware of the new skills they will need—including skills required to ensure their economic well-being if they need to remain in or return to the job market and skills required to adapt to both a fast-changing world and the changes they face personally with aging and retirement—they are likely to press for programs to meet their needs.

Community colleges have the opportunity to prepare for that inevitability by planning how best to utilize their limited resources to provide effective programming that meets the needs of their constituents and the nation.

# Older Adults, Community Colleges, and Economic and Educational Imperatives

The Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults was undertaken within the context of changing demographics, changing educational patterns, and changing economic imperatives. It was also undertaken with the predisposition to use its results—which have been detailed in the preceding section of this report—to advance an agenda that includes expanding and improving community college programs for older adults in order to help meet the changing needs of this growing constituency and the changing economic needs of the nation.

## Older Adults

### Changing Demographics

These are some of the key facts: In 1989, persons 65 years of age or older numbered 31.0 million, or 12.5 percent of the population. This group increased 21 percent during the 1980s, compared to an increase of 8 percent for all other age groups. This older adult population will continue to grow, more than doubling to 65.6 million by the year 2030, when the "baby boom" generation matures. Part of the reason for this growth is that people continue to live longer; the life expectancy of a person reaching age 65 in 1988 was an additional 16.9 years.

Added to this are the changing demographics of the American work force. Projections by the U. S. Bureau of the Census show that the work force is fast becoming older. The 20-29 age group, from which most new workers have historically been recruited, will decline in size from 40.1 million to 34.5 million between 1990 and 2000. At the same time, the 50-59 age group will grow from 21.9 million to 30.6 million. The 60-69 age group will become slightly smaller, and all age groups from 70 upward will experience dramatic increases in size.

Projections by the Bureau of Labor Statistics identify the three groups that will contribute the majority of new entrants into the work force by the year 2000: 1) women, 2) minorities, and 3) older adults. By 2000, only 15 percent of new entrants into the work force will be white males, though they make up 47 percent of the current work force.

### Lifelong Learning

Increasingly large groups of older adults will be healthier, more active, and better educated than previous generations. Educational attainment levels of older adults are expected to increase from 11.3 years of schooling in 1990 to 12.5 in the year 2000. Many older adults will be exploring second, third, and fourth careers in retirement. The decrease in the dependency ratios of older workers to retirees will require that many older persons continue to work and upgrade or develop new job skills. Also, projected workforce shortages, especially of highly skilled workers, will require greater participation of older adults in order to ensure the competitiveness of the American economy.

While large numbers of older adults will turn to education for job or career related reasons, many will look to education for personal enrichment or practical skill building purposes. They will also seek opportunities to enhance leadership and volunteer roles. It has become widely accepted that older adults are capable of learning and eager to learn.

Studies have shown that older adults are more actively engaged in educational pursuits than ever before. Although educational participation rates of older adults are on the increase, the

numbers are small in relation to younger age groups. However, trends support the notion that the numbers of older adults participating in educational programs will continue to grow as emerging cohorts of older Americans will have achieved higher levels of education. The correlation between the extent of formal education and rate of participation in adult education activities holds true for older as well as younger adults, so the need for educational institutions, agencies, government, and business and industry to begin planning is long overdue.

Educational programs sponsored by Elderhostel and other senior-specific programs have grown rapidly over the last ten years. Senior centers have been successful in increasing educational program offerings as they are natural settings for group activities. Unfortunately, an "aging in place" phenomenon has occurred in senior centers in which the clientele is becoming increasingly older and less healthy, creating a social service climate rather than a true educational setting conducive to learning. Newer generations of older adults appear increasingly less interested in participating in centers that focus on providing social services.

Educational opportunities in the next decade will have to address a broader range of possibilities, including training and upgrading of vocational skills as well as avocational programs for older adults with increased leisure time. Changing demographics are bringing into question how much retirement society can support in the twenty-first century. The challenge to educators will be educating older adults to help them cope with societal and personal changes.

### Gerontological Training

At the same time, an aging society has produced a growing need for professionals with gerontological training. Community colleges have long been the primary source of entry-level occupational training, and, as the population ages, more job opportunities will be available at the associate-degree level. Also, many of the new human service jobs at various levels require training and education about aging, but many programs do not include significant gerontological content.

### Economic and Educational Imperatives

In summary, to meet the educational needs of older adults in the next decade and beyond, programs need to be developed in the following areas:

- job training and career preparation to assist mid-life and older adults to meet the skill requirements of a changing work place in order to contribute to the nation's work force and enhance their own economic well-being;
- practical life skills to assist older adults to cope effectively with changing social, economic, and technological demands;
- personal enrichment educational opportunities to assist older adults in pursuing lifelong learning;
- gerontological training to ensure that older persons have access to knowledgeable and skilled professionals in the human services fields.

Community colleges are well-positioned and capable of providing these educational opportunities at the local level where they can efficiently and effectively reach the greatest number of older adults and others interested in learning more about aging and aging issues.

## Community Colleges

### Emerging Institutions

During the 1980s, community colleges emerged as mature and sophisticated institutions not only providing a critical link between the K-12 system and higher education and the work force,

but also contributing with local efforts to the solution of pressing national economic and educational problems.

Community colleges have developed rapidly since their emergence in the 1960s and are now the largest and fastest-growing segment of higher education. These 1,224 institutions enroll over five million credit students, an additional five million noncredit students, and represent nearly half of all students enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide. Fifty-five percent of all new students entering college each fall begin at a community college. Community college enrollments continue to grow at annual rates of 5-15 percent while enrollments in other institutions of higher education have stabilized or are declining.

**Meeting a Range of Needs**

A community college is located within commuting distance of over 90 percent of the nation's population, thus making them key institutions in reaching the entire citizenry. They have become the primary means of access to higher education for an increasingly large segment of the population. Minorities and other disadvantaged groups have long sought upward social and economic mobility through community college transfer, occupational, and general education programs. These high-quality, but affordable, programs attract students from all economic groups as a financially prudent higher education alternative. Older adults have been attracted to a range of community college programs offered in flexible formats through the rapidly expanding community service and continuing education divisions.

Community colleges enroll students representing a wide range of ages, racial and ethnic groups, and educational backgrounds and skill levels; their demographics are more representative of the demographics of the nation as a whole than those of any other institutions of higher education. As evidenced by their open-door admissions policies, community colleges are committed to providing a range of programs and services to meet the needs of all of their constituents, including those underprepared to meet the challenges of the classroom or the work place, as well as those requiring a range of nontraditional educational programs and services to assist them to lead independent and productive lives. In addition, community colleges have a long history of developing effective programs to meet the various expressed educational needs of the constituents in their local communities.

Community colleges' commitment to access has been aided by the rapid pace of technological development. They have developed telecommunications capabilities, including broadcast, cable, and satellite transmission, to reach constituents who can not easily take advantage of campus-based programs. Community colleges are leading institutions in the delivery of distance education and have the capability and the inclination to reach out to new clientele through technology.

**Solving Problems**

Perhaps one of the most critical characteristics of community colleges is the leading role that they play in their communities and regions. Community colleges are accustomed to working jointly with a wide variety of community groups, including chambers of commerce, churches and synagogues, social service organizations, local business and industry, labor unions, and other key groups. They often serve as the hub for local networks dealing with community problems, ranging from drug education to economic development and from housing to health care.

In fact, an increasing number of business and political leaders on the local, state, and national level have come to recognize the critical role that community colleges will have to play in preparing the nation's work force to compete effectively in the emerging global economy. With this recognition comes increasingly high expectations that community colleges assist in serving the needs of all the nation's citizens, including older adults.

### Rationale for Action

The preceding demographic, economic, and educational trends provide a clear rationale for community colleges to prepare to become a major provider of programs to meet the lifelong learning needs of older adults. While community colleges have historically served this clientele through their continuing education and community service divisions, the results of the survey show that this approach has not produced comprehensive approaches to programming to meet the fast-changing needs of this rapidly growing group of citizens.

Community colleges are positioned to become a major provider of needed programs for older adults because of their historical commitment to serving nontraditional students with special needs, because of their accessibility to the majority of the population of older adults, and because of their demonstrated ability to develop and implement effective programs quickly and efficiently. The major obstacle to community colleges' providing programs for older adults is limited financial and staff resources. However, it is certain that older adults have the influence required to obtain support for community college programs designed to meet their needs should they choose to exercise it for this purpose.

What is needed now is a better understanding of the demographics of this diverse group of older adults, its needs in a fast-changing economic and technological environment, and the critical components of successful programs for serving this clientele. Perhaps an increased awareness among educational, business, and political leaders about the critical role that older adults will play in ensuring the economic competitiveness of the nation is also needed to spur commitment and support for educational programs for older adults.

### An Agenda for Action

So, it is within this context that AARP and the League for Innovation in the Community College joined in partnership to pursue activities aimed at improving and expanding community college programs for older adults. The Survey of Community College Programs and Services for Older Adults was conducted to establish baseline data for such programs and to identify areas on which to focus future efforts. The survey results suggest the following agenda for joint action:

1. Focus national attention on issues, programs, and concerns related to serving the educational needs of older adults by disseminating information through publications, periodicals, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

2. Increase awareness among community college leaders, academic administrators, and faculty about the changing demographics of older adults, the role older adults will play in the national economy, and the implications of an aging society on educational and other institutions through publications, periodicals, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

3. Identify successful programs in a wide variety of subjects offered by community colleges that are designed for older adults and disseminate information about these programs to community colleges nationwide.

4. Develop case studies of model approaches to providing comprehensive programming for older adults in community

colleges, establish guidelines for developing and implementing successful programs, and disseminate these guidelines to community colleges nationwide.

5. Facilitate the dissemination of curricular, training, and marketing resources available from organizations that specialize in aging to assist the development and implementation of community college programs for older adults.

6. Conduct regional training workshops for community college leaders, program directors, faculty, and other practitioners to assist them in developing and operating successful programs for older adults.

7. Assist in the development of a national network of community colleges which focuses on providing programs to meet the lifelong learning needs of older adults.

AARP and the League for Innovation recognize that this is an ambitious agenda. The resources necessary to support these activities have not yet been identified. Nonetheless, both organizations express their commitment to this agenda as a plan to pursue their common objective of expanding and improving community college programs for older adults. They seek the support of those who can assist in achieving this goal and offer whatever support they can to others with the same commitment.

# SURVEY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS

Dear Colleague:

The League for Innovation in the Community College and the American Association of Retired Persons are collaborating to determine the extent to which community colleges nationwide are providing programs and services for older adults and their interest in expanding such programs and services. We need the help of professionals like you in this effort to survey all community colleges in the United States. Your response is critical to insure representative results.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to answer the survey questions as completely as you can. In all cases, please provide the best answer to the question. If necessary, please estimate rather than leave questions unanswered.

While you may complete the survey anonymously if you wish, we urge you to provide your name and address so that we can include you on a list of key contacts for community college programs and services for older adults. We would also be pleased to send you a summary of survey results and a catalog of AARP resources.

Please don't hesitate to call the League office if we can be of help. Thanks again.

Terry O'Banion, League for Innovation in the Community College

CatherineVentura-Merkel, American Association of Retired Persons

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED SURVEY BY DECEMBER 15, 1989, TO:

**League for Innovation in the Community College**
**25431 Cabot Road, Suite 204**
**Laguna Hills, CA 92653**
Tel (714) 855-0710; Fax (714) 855-6293

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*Directions: Provide the best possible information available to you. Estimate when necessary rather than leave questions unanswered or delay completing the survey. Indicate estimates with an asterisk (*). It is not necessary to type; simply print legible responses to each question.*

## COLLEGE INFORMATION

1. Type of college: (Check all that apply.)
   - __ comprehensive community college
   - __ technical institute
   - __ junior college
   - __ two-year branch/campus of a university
   - __ suburban
   - __ urban
   - __ rural
   - __ public
   - __ private

2. Enrollment and budget:
   - total headcount, credit courses, fall 1989 _____
   - total credit hours, fall 1989 _____
   - total noncredit enrollment, fall 1989 _____
   - total budget, 1989-90 fiscal year _____

3. Population of service area: _____

4. Location of college:
   - state _____
   - zip code _____
   - largest city in service area _____

5. Percentage of funding by source:
   - % state funds _____
   - % local funds _____
   - % tuition and other income _____

6. Total number of adults 60 or older served, fall 1989:
   - # in credit courses _____
   - # in noncredit programs and services _____

7. Characteristics of adults 60 or older served by your college's courses and programs: (Estimate percentages as necessary.)

| | *credit* | *noncredit* |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| % male | _____ | _____ |
| % female | _____ | _____ |
| Racial/ethnic | | |
| % white | _____ | _____ |
| % Black | _____ | _____ |
| % Hispanic | _____ | _____ |
| % Asian | _____ | _____ |
| % American Indian | _____ | _____ |

## MOST COMMON DELIVERY FORMATS

14. Please indicate the *most common formats* your college uses to deliver *programs designed specifically for older adults*. For each pair of responses, indicate by circling *the most commonly used formats* for programs and services in the subject areas noted.

| | *format* credit/noncredit | *# of sessions* single/multiple | *distance* TV/in-person | *site* on/off-campus | *interaction* group/individualized |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. financial management skills | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| b. health and health care | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| c. career and occupational skills | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| d. cultural/recreational activities | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| e. personal development | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |

## EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMATS

Rate the effectiveness of each of the following formats or methods that you have used at your college to provide *programs and services designed specifically for older adults* by circling the best response for each item.

| | *very effective* | *generally effective* | *not effective* | *have not used* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. *Delivery formats* | | | | |
| a. single session workshops, presentations, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. multiple session courses, seminars, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. lecture series | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. peer-led discussion groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e. support groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f. telecourses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| g. programs for home personal computers or VCRs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| h. college credit courses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| i. tuition waiver for credit courses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| j. waiver or reduced fees for noncredit programs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. *Instructional materials and methods* | | | | |
| a. published workbooks and texts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. instructor-prepared materials, handouts, etc | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. slides, video or audio tapes, overheads, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. computer-assisted programs, tutorials, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e. self-tests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. *Use of staff* | | | | |
| a. regular, full-time college instructors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. visiting, adjunct, or part-time instructors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. selected professionals in the field | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. volunteers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. *Communications and advertising vehicles* | | | | |
| a. radio | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. broadcast television | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. cable or public access television | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. newspaper ads or articles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e. brochures, flyers, and posters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f. staff presentations at senior centers, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## TRAINING FOR CAREGIVERS

19. Indicate the audiences to whom your college provides training for unpaid caregivers of older adults by circling the most appropriate response. (Circle all that apply.)

| | *for adult children, spouses, relatives, and friends* | *for volunteers* | *does not offer training* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. nutrition | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| b. home health care skills | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| c. medication use and abuse | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| d. first aid and emergency procedures | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| e. implications of normal aging | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| f. home adaptations and home care products | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| g. diseases and their implications | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| h. Alzheimer's and other dementias and their implications | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| i. community resources and services | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| j. interpersonal communications skills | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| k. other (List.) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS

*First*, indicate the current status of your college's programs and services *designed specifically for older adults* by circling the most appropriate response (from 1-4) for each of the subject areas listed below. *Second*, indicate those regular college programs and services in which older adults participate in significant numbers but which are *not* designed specifically for them by circling "yes."

| | **(1) current program designed specifically for older adults** | **(2) no current program; but one planned/being considered** | **(3) no current program or plans; but need exists for older adults** | **(4) no program, no plans, and no perceived community need** | *Older adults participate in significant numbers in regular college programs not specifically designed for them in these subjects.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. *Financial management skills* | | | | | |
| a. setting financial goals, basic financial management, record keeping, budgeting, paying bills, credit, banking, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| b. savings and investments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| c. wills, probates, and trusts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| d. taxes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| e. pensions, Social Security, and public benefits | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| f. health, life, car, and home insurance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| g. selecting and using financial professionals | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| h. consumer and legal rights | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| i. retirement financial planning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| 9. *Health and health care* | | | | | |
| a. exercise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| b. nutrition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| c. injury prevention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| d. driving safety | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| e. mental health education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| f. medication education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| g. dental health education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| h. smoking cessation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| i. long-term care services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| j. selecting and using health care providers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| 10. *Career and occupational education* | | | | | |
| a. career counseling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| b. job placement assistance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| c. literacy training (reading, writing, math) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| d. technological literacy, including computer literacy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| e. skills training for self-employment (List fields.) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| f. skills training for post-retirement occupations (List fields.) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| 11. *Cultural, recreational, and enrichment activities* | | | | | |
| a. trips | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | yes |
| b. participation in organized athletic programs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| c. participation in performing arts (choir, dance, band, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| d. programs in the humanities and social sciences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| e. forums on political issues and civic concerns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| f. programs for arts, crafts, and other hobbies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| 12. *Personal development* | | | | | |
| a. self-esteem, self-confidence, and assertiveness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| b. volunteer skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| c. leadership development skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| d. interpersonal communications skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| e. coping with loss/grieving | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| f. retirement lifestyle options | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| 13. *Other programs and services (List.)* | | | | | |
| a. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |
| b. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Yes |

20. Indicate the length and formality of training your college provides for paid professional and paraprofessional caregivers for older adults. (Circle all that apply.)

| | *associate degree program* | *one-year certificate program* | *< one-year certificate program* | *short-term noncredit certificate* | *training but no degree or certificate* | *does not offer training* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. gerontology, health care emphasis | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| b. gerontology, human services emphasis | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| c. nursing home and geriatric aide | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| d. other (List.) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| e. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| f. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

**OBSTACLES AND NEEDED ASSISTANCE**

21. What are the greatest obstacles that your college must overcome in order to serve older adults more effectively? (Check all that apply.)
___ lack of funding
___ lack of trained staff
___ lack of appropriate materials and resources
___ difficulty reaching older adult audience
___ inaccessible or inappropriate locations
___ competition from other providers
___ lack of interest from college leaders
___ other, please specify

22. What services provided by AARP or other national organizations would most assist your college to offer programs and services effectively for older adults in your service area? (Check all that apply.)
___ training
___ technical assistance
___ curriculum materials
___ publications for handouts
___ other, please specify

**COLLEGE ORGANIZATION TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULTS**

23. Which of the following *best* describes your college's current approach for providing programs and services for older adults? (Check only one.)
___ The college offers a wide variety of programs and services for all members of the community, but none are designed specifically for older adults.
___ The college offers a wide variety of programs and services, and some are designed specifically for older adults.
___ The college offers a wide variety of programs and services designed specifically for older adults as an important part of its mission to serve the needs of the community.
___ Other (Please describe approach briefly.)

24. Are all or most college programs and services designed specifically for older adults coordinated by one office? ___yes ___no

**IF YES:**
a. name of office _____
b. title of principal administrator _____
c. principal administrator reports to (title) _____

**IF NO:**
d. What offices, departments, and divisions of the college offer programs and services designed specifically for older adults? Estimate what percentage of program activity is conducted by each.

| *Office/Department/Division* | *Percentage of Activity* |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

**SURVEY RESULTS AND KEY CONTACTS**

We are developing a list of key contacts in community colleges for providing programs and services for older adults. If you would like to be included on that list, please check the appropriate item and provide your name and address. Also, please indicate if you would like to receive a summary of survey results and a catalog of AARP resources.

**___ I wish to be included on a list of key contacts.** **___ I wish to receive a summary of results and an AARP catalog.**

Name_____ Title_____
College_____
Street_____ City/State/Zip code_____
Telephone_____ Fax_____

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this important survey.***

USE THE ENCLOSED BUSINESS RESPONSE ENVELOPE TO RETURN THE SURVEY.